

New Migrations, Ethnicity and Nationalism in Southeast and East Asia¹

Stephen Castles, University of Wollongong

1. Introduction

The rapidly increasing mobility of the population is a central aspect of the widespread social transformations occurring in East and Southeast Asia. This involves migrations of many types: migrant workers, business people, professionals, family members or refugees. It also takes place across many scales, from internal, to neighbouring countries or intercontinental. Much migration is the result of labour-recruitment by governments and employers, but it is rapidly becomes a self-sustaining process. Two factors, the emergence of social networks linking migrants and the development of a 'migration industry', including agents and brokers of all kinds, tend to perpetuate migration flows.² In this context, government immigration policies are often unsuccessful. Immigrant policies (e.g. policies concerning the situation of foreign residents) are generally reactive, ad hoc, and often ineffective.

Although I shall concentrate on the period since the 1970s, some historical background is relevant and necessary. Asian migration has been a major factor in world history. Major episodes include westward migrations from Central Asia into Europe during the so-called Dark Ages, Chinese migrations to SE Asia and also Arab traders in SE Asia. Prof. Wang Gungwu has described this circulation of peoples in a 'maritime world'. There were also colonial migrations; labour migrations of Chinese and Japanese to America, Australia etc., until their decline from 1880s, mainly due to discriminatory rules in the countries of destination.

The resurgence of migration in the region can be attributed to two main trigger events: (1) changes in the immigration law in the 1960s, particularly in the USA in 1965, which allowed large-scale migration from Asia to USA, Australia and Canada; (2) the 1973 Oil Crisis, which initiated mass labour recruitment to the Gulf. Although these were the surface causes of renewed migration, there were also deeper underlying causes related to massive economic, demographic and social changes in Asia, which have changed existing social structures and life-styles. These include:

- the integration of the region into the world economy
- the Green Revolution, which set agricultural workers free to move into cities and then into international migration
- uneven development within South East Asia, between the Tiger economies and others which were more stagnant, or where fast population growth was not matched by economic growth
- political instability and internal conflict, above all the Vietnam war, which produced major refugee flows

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² The 'migration industry': migration agents or labour recruiters, motivated by commercial or other considerations. These people organise migration through transnational networks, which are difficult for governments to control. Some agents have links with organised crime, and indulge in trafficking of illegal migrants, exploitation of workers and abuse of women and children through recruitment for the sex industry.

- the 'migration transition', a condition associated with the demographic transition. In the first stage of development there are high birth rates and declining mortality rates, leading to population growth and out-migration. In the second stage there are falling fertility rates and declining population growth, leading to a shortage of labour and in-migration. This transition took a couple of centuries in Europe, but has happened in some Asian countries within 30 or 40 years.

In turn migrations became important factors in social transformation of both the sending and the receiving countries. I am not concerned here with the important economic effects but with the social, cultural and political effects, namely:

- SE Asian countries as post-colonial 'nation-building states'. What is the effect of population mobility and new ethno-cultural diversity on this process?
- Some E. Asian countries have strong myths of ethno-cultural homogeneity. These are threatened by globalisation, of which migration is a central aspect.
- Uneven move towards more democracy and greater citizen rights - how is this affected by presence of new minorities, who are often denied rights?

I will first give a brief summary of current trends immigration concerning Asia, including some discussion of the effects of the current Asian crisis. Then I will discuss some conceptual issues with regard to the effects of migration on citizenship and democracy in Asian countries. Finally I will look briefly at three countries which epitomise different types of migration situation.

2. Migration since the 1970s

Asia has witnessed all the major forms of migration. These include mass internal movement, for example within China, where up to 30 million people are on the move, or the Transmigration Programme in Indonesia, in which something like 18 million people have moved from Java to the other islands. There is also international migration. By the mid-1990s, there were estimated to be about 3 million Asians legally employed outside their own countries within the Asian region, and another 3 million employed in other continents. These include manual workers to the Gulf states, but also a growing trend towards highly skilled migration. In addition there are perhaps 7 or 8 million of refugees and family members. The number of illegal migrants, at perhaps over 3 million, may well exceed that of legal migrants. Finally, there are clear signs of permanent settler migration.

The key issues in Asian migration are:

- the growth in the volume and rapidity of migration
- the diversification of countries of origin, which makes policy implementation in any one country difficult
- the lack of forward planning, much as Europe in the past, for example Germany, the Netherlands or Switzerland in the 1960s.
- the growth in illegal immigration
- increasing feminisation: about 1.5 million Asian women were working abroad by the mid-1990s, and in many migratory movements they outnumbered men. Although men led the movement to the Gulf, there are also important female-led movements, e.g. from the Philippines to Hong Kong, from Sri Lanka to Singapore, or entertainers to Japan. Most migrant women are concentrated in jobs regarded as 'typically female': domestic workers, entertainers (often a euphemism for prostitution), restaurant and hotel staff, assembly-line workers in clothing and electronics. At least half of the labour migrants in Asia are women.

Migrations within and from Asia can be classified according to a number of types.

Asian Migration to Western countries

After 1945, there were movements to the United Kingdom, France and the Netherlands from former colonies, but these virtually ceased by the 1970s. More recently, there has been some migration of both highly-skilled Asian workers and of low-skilled workers, such as Filipino domestic servants to Italy. There were also refugee movements after the Vietnam War and asylum-seeker inflows in the 1980s and 1990s.

Asia is now the main area of origin for migrants to the USA, Australia, Canada and New Zealand. Migrations from Asia to the USA, Canada and Australia have common features: immigration started after the removal of discriminatory restrictions in the 1960s and 1970s, with additional stimulus from Indo-Chinese refugee movements. Unexpectedly large movements have developed mainly through use of family reunion provisions. The countries of origin have been largely the same, with increasing participation of China and Hong Kong in recent years. By 1990, there were 6.9 million Asian-Americans, and the number was expected to increase to over 10 million by the end of the century. The picture for Canada, Australia and New Zealand is similar. Within such countries, there is a significant trend towards permanent settlement.

Contract labour migration to the Middle East

Large-scale migration from Asia to the Middle East developed after the oil price rise of 1973. Labour came at first mainly from India and Pakistan, in the 1980s also from the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand and the Republic of Korea, and later from Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. By 1985, there were 3.2 million Asian workers in the Gulf states, of whom over 2 million were in Saudi Arabia. Although there was some return migration during Gulf War, migration to the Middle East subsequently increased, even in Israel, to which migrants from Thailand and Burma have moved.

In the 1970s, most migrants were male workers employed on construction projects. The temporary decline of the construction sector after 1985 encouraged a shift into the services sector. There was an upsurge in demand for domestic servants, which led to a feminisation of contract labour flows from the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, the Republic of Korea and Sri Lanka. Migration to the Middle East takes place within rigid contract labour frameworks: workers are not allowed to settle or bring in dependents, and lack civil or political rights. They are often segregated in barracks, can be deported for misconduct, and frequently have to work very long hours. Women domestic workers sometimes suffer sexual abuse. Even so, there are signs that migration is turning into permanent settlement.

Labour migration within Asia

Labour-importing countries include Japan, the Republic of Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore and oil-rich Brunei. Malaysia and Thailand have both emigration and immigration. The labour for the 'tiger economies' comes from countries with slower economic development and continuing labour force growth, such as China, the South Asian countries, Philippines and Indonesia. Migrant workers do the '3D jobs' - dirty, dangerous and difficult - that nationals reject. For instance in Singapore about

300,000 foreign workers make up one fifth of the labour force. Foreign men work in construction, ship-building, transport and services; women are mainly in domestic service and other services. Even in much larger economies like Japan or Malaysia, foreign workers have become indispensable in certain sectors.

Most Asian governments treat migrants as temporary workers, with very limited rights and no entitlement to settlement and family reunion. Receiving countries are worried about structural dependence on foreign labour and about the possible social effects of settlement.

Highly-qualified migrants

An international labour market for highly-skilled personnel is currently emerging, with Asia as the main source. Immigration countries, such as the USA, Australia and Canada offer various inducements to attract them.

There are two main types: (1) the 'Brain Drain' of university-trained people moving from underdeveloped to highly-developed countries. This is an economic loss for the poorer countries, which have covered the costs of upbringing and education; (2) 'Professional transients' (as Reg Appleyard terms them), executives and professionals sent by their companies to work in overseas branches or joint ventures, or experts sent by international organisations to work in aid programmes. Highly-skilled migration grew rapidly in the 1980s and 1990s, and is a key element of globalisation. Much of the movement is of fairly short-term nature (a few months to one or two years) and involves interchange of personnel between the highly-developed economies of Japan, the USA and Western Europe. However, some migration of highly-skilled personnel is the result of capital investment by companies from industrialised countries in less-developed areas. Such workers carry an enormous potential for cultural change: in Japan there is a debate about the role of returning business people in bringing new ideas into the country.

Students

Considerable numbers of Asians have gone to developed countries to study in recent years. For instance, Australia had 104,000 foreign student arrivals in 1994-95, with the largest groups coming from Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, the Republic of Korea and Japan. There is considerable competition among developed countries to market education to Asia, with a trend towards joint ventures with Asian universities. Student movement to developed countries may be part of the brain drain, since many do not return. In the long term, however, it is likely that students play a role in both technology transfer and cultural change.

Refugees

About one third of the world's 27 million 'refugees and other persons of concern' to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) have their origins in Asia. Over two million people fled from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia following the end of the Vietnam War in 1975. Up to a third of Afghanistan's population of 18 million fled the country in the years following the Soviet military intervention in 1979. Apart from these two huge movements, there have been many exoduses smaller in number, but no less traumatic for those concerned.

The Asian experience shows the complexity of refugee situations: they are hardly

ever a simple matter of individual political persecution. Economic and environmental pressures play a major part, while long-standing ethnic and religious differences exacerbate conflicts. Resolution of refugee situations is hampered by scarcity of resources and lack of guarantees for human rights in weak and despotic states. Where refugees do find a haven and adequate food and shelter, basic education and health care, there may be little motivation for returning to devastated and impoverished homelands. Refugee movements, like labour migrations, are the result of the massive social transformations currently taking place in Asia.

3. Effects of the 1997-98 Financial and Economic Crisis

Following the onset of the financial and economic crisis in Asia, there was an initial expectation of large-scale return movement and sharp fall in new migration. Parallels could perhaps be drawn with Western Europe after the 1973-74 oil crisis and the end of the 'guestworker system'. In fact, it is too early to be sure what is actually happening, but it is clear that effects will be quite complex and contradictory. There have certainly been rapid declines in some sectors, especially construction, and many projects have stopped dead, notably in Malaysia and Thailand.

But, whatever the official pronouncements, governments have had substantial difficulties in carrying out mass deportations for a number of reasons:

- Institutional weaknesses and lack of documentation. In Malaysia there are problems determining who were actually migrants, given the cultural and linguistic similarities between Malaysians and Indonesians.
- Structural dependence on migrant workers for certain types of jobs (domestic service, low-level service jobs, unskilled manufacturing, plantations).
- Nationals are still not willing to take these jobs - although this is beginning to change.

Furthermore, there is a general lack of motivation to leave, because there are no jobs in areas of origin and the income differentials between, say Malaysia and Indonesia, are even bigger than before. Indonesia puts political pressure on Malaysia not to deport migrants because of the country's own economic and political difficulties. There are new waves of illegal migrants.

There has been redeployment in some economies, for example in Japan, where manufacturing jobs being taken by legal (overseas migrants of Japanese ancestry) Nikkei, while undocumented workers move into small-scale industry. In Malaysia Indonesian workers being redeployed from manufacturing to plantations, and in Hong Kong Filipina maids being replaced by mainland Chinese. In addition, there is some return to earlier patterns, for example Thais and Malaysians being encouraged to go to the Gulf or to Taiwan. Against these developments, there are significant signs of permanent settlement, in Japan and Thailand community formation is clearly established.

The big question arising at this juncture is: *Is the crisis a turning point in Asian migration, comparable to the years after the oil crisis in Western Europe?* In Europe, it was anticipated that unemployment could be 'exported' and that migrants would return home. This did not happen. The same expectations are being voiced across Asia a generation later, but will the outcome be the same?

4. National Identity and Citizenship: Conceptual Issues

The central question is: *What is the likely significance of migration and settlement for the emergence of nation-states, democracy and notions of citizenship in Asia?*

There is a danger that posing the problem this way may reflect eurocentric and teleological thinking. It seems to imply that the inevitable and desirable end-point of societal development is the democratic nation-state, in which the status of the individual member is that of a citizen. This would fit in with the ideas of Fukuyama, or indeed with older modernisation theories, which argued that industrialisation and economic growth would inevitably lead to liberal democracy.

Newer forms of modernisation theory abandon the idea of an automatic transformation, instead putting forward a notion of human agency: industrialisation creates social groups which have an interest in struggling for democratisation and the rule of law. In this view, entrepreneurs, professional, media producers and similar groups form *new middle classes*, which act as agents of change. The result is the emergence of a *civil society*, which creates pressure for democratisation. All this is seen as following the European model, in which civil societies emerged prior to the democratic revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries.

However, in Asia, civil society groups may be closely linked to the state and may often be co-opted into it. Moreover, the economic transformation in the 'four tiger economies' was actually achieved by capitalists working closely with authoritarian governments. Leaders such as Mr. Mahatir put 'Asian values' of community responsibility above the human rights and individual liberties of the western model.

Despite such difficulties, I still believe that it is justified to pose the central issue in terms of the emergence of the democratic nation-state and citizenship in Asia. This is because these have become global norms, and the leaders of most Asian countries aspire to them. There are exceptions such as Burma and China, but even here there are usually oppositions demanding democratic rights. But despite the important differences, one can say that colonialism was so effective in destroying earlier forms of political power, that post-colonial liberation movements could only conceive of building independent nation states on the European model. Within this framework, of course, the actual content may be totally different. This is what a lot of political struggles in Asia are about, for instance People Power in the Philippines, the Democratic Movement in Thailand or the recent events in Indonesia.

Therefore, nation-statehood and citizenship are increasingly seen as the core of modernity. An illustration of this was when the President of Mongolia, Punsalmaagiyu Orchibat visited Paris, the symbolic birthplace of the modern nation. He said: 'In 1990 we embarked on a great journey to join the common course of mankind - democracy and human rights, the market economy and economic development' (*Le Monde/Guardian Weekly* 5 May, 1996). Those were the icons of progress, and the linking of economic progress with democracy is crucial.

Interestingly, some of the explanations of the Asian crisis emphasise the weakness of civil society institutions, which have not been able to control corruption, cronyism and poor financial management. South Korean President Kim Dae-jung, in particular has stressed the need for democracy in order to restore economic confidence.

So it seems to that there are underlying, if often weak and uneven, trends towards democratisation and emergence of citizenship rights. Immigration and the development of new forms of ethno-cultural diversity may influence such developments in various ways.

In conceptual terms, it is important to stress the contradictory nature of citizenship in the western nation-state model: the liberal-democratic state is generally seen in political theory as a 'universal and homogenous state'. In principle, it is meant to abstract from all cultural differences (of nationality, ethnicity, race, religion, etc.) to create a homogenous civil culture, in which all citizens have equal rights and obligations. The more culturally different the people of a given area are, the harder it is to achieve such a state. By increasing heterogeneity, immigration therefore may make it harder to achieve a democratic state.

The notion of the free citizen goes back to the medieval towns, which developed as places of refuge from feudal servitude. Through guilds and corporations, the citizens developed forms of countervailing power which undermined the draconian prerogatives of nobles and Church.

But in the era of modernity, citizenship depended not on residence in a city but on membership of a specific national community (e.g. being French, German, Italian, etc.). A citizen was always also a member of a nation, a *national*. So citizenship is meant to be universalistic and above cultural difference, yet it exists only in the context of a nation-state, which is based on cultural specificity: on the belief in being different from other nations.

Since very few nation-states actually start off with a single national group, the question is how the varying ethnic groups in a territory are to be moulded into one nation. This may take place through the forcible imposition of the culture of the dominant group. Or the process may be a more gradual and consensual one, in which groups grow together through economic and social interaction, and the development of a common language and shared institutions, such as schools, church and military service. Usually it is a mixture of both repression and growing together around shared values.

The key principle is what Renan termed as the importance to nation-building of *having time to forget* the history of repression and cultural homogenisation.

This fundamental contradiction between citizen and national is at the root of many historical problems, such as anti-Semitism, racism and nationalism. It was never fully overcome within the nation-state model: the wars triggered by rival nationalisms were only ended through *supranational* approaches after 1945 - and even then not completely, as the example of former Yugoslavia has shown.

To what extent is the European model transportable to Asia? There are clearly some important historical differences, which make such a translation problematic.

Firstly, the long historical process which led to the emergence of the democratic citizenry in Europe has no parallel in Asia. Asian rulers did encourage artisan-production and long-distance trade. But this did not lead to autonomous cities capable of contesting the power of the rulers. Peasant rebellions (for instance in China) merely established new dynasties, without changing political structures. Trading classes were often minority groups, such as overseas Chinese or Arabs.

Thus the idea of democratic sovereignty is something relatively new and untried in Asia. Even so, working for political objectives through negotiation within complex authoritarian structures has a long tradition.

Secondly, the western model of the nation-state and citizenship came to Asia through the distorting mirror of colonialism. France offered citizenship to some of the colonised people of Indochina; Britain and the Netherlands made colonised people into subjects of their monarchs; the USA preached democratic values in the Philippines. But the ideals of human rights and citizenship were always tarnished with the realities of dispossession, exploitation and racism. The western nation-state showed its full ambivalence in Asia. Yet colonialism was so effective in destroying previous state-forms, that colonial liberation movements usually set out to take over the political model of the colonisers. The new post-colonial states were largely based on the western form, but without the historical process that had led to its emergence. Above all, the democratic citizen was absent. The trade unions, parties and liberation movements established to fight colonialism tried to create a democratic-nationalist consciousness. They often failed: military rule or other forms of authoritarianism were widespread from the 1950s to the 1970s.

Thirdly, the post-colonial nation-states developed so quickly that there was *no time to forget*. What took centuries in Europe had to be done in one or two generations in Asia. Ruling elites had no opportunity to homogenise the various ethnic and national groups brought together by colonialism into one people. In some cases, colonialism had cut across traditional ethnic boundaries; in others long-standing ethnic divisions were exacerbated by colonialism (such as the situation of the Chinese in Southeast Asia); in yet others, colonial labour recruitment had created new minorities (e.g. the Indians in Malaysia). Where there were cleavages of religion, ethnicity, culture or economic interests, the rule of a dominant group was often imposed by force.

This is not to argue that there have not been quite successful examples of nation-building in the last fifty years: Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, etc. all provide interesting models for building unity out of diversity. Rather the point is that national consciousness is still in the process of being established and that this often represents considerable difficulties. One cannot say that the national and the citizen are generally emerging in parallel, as was the experience in at least some European countries. The strains arising from attempts to develop a single national community out of diverse cultures may make it all the harder to include immigrants into the nation. And late nations are always the most nationalistic ones.

These problems can best be illustrated by three examples of different types of country: an emigration country - the Philippines; a monocultural immigration country - Japan; and a multicultural immigration country - Malaysia.

5. An Emigration Country: the Philippines

The governments of labour-sending countries see migration as vital to their development, partly because they hope it will reduce unemployment and provide training and industrial experience, but mainly because of the worker remittances, which have become a vital economic factor. Export of labour is crucial to the Philippine economy. It has been estimated that unemployment levels would be 40 per cent higher without labour emigration. Official remittances from migrants in 1994 were US\$2.94 billion, which financed 50 per cent of the external trade deficit.

Labour recruitment of Overseas Contract Workers (OCWs) is organised by Philippines Overseas Employment Administration, but also by private recruiters.

The Philippines is the labour-exporter par excellence of the modern age (rather like Italy a generation or two ago). Estimates for mid-1997 are given by Bohning (1998): to the Middle East, 1 million, mainly documented workers; to elsewhere in Asia, 816,000 documented and 565,000 undocumented, the largest number to Malaysia, 500,000 (of which 400,000 undocumented); to the USA, Canada, Australia: 1.9 million (mainly permanent settlers). This gives a total of about 4.3 million (plus 'guestworkers of the seas').

What does it mean for a nation to have to send its most precious resource overseas to survive? A special issue of the *Philippine Sociological Review* (44:1-4, 1996) set out to answer this question. Admitting to the permanent loss of substantial groups of citizens can be seen as a 'national shame' because it means admitting that the country of origin is incapable of providing an acceptable life to its citizens. Emigration has become a part of national economic strategies, but this leads to public debates, because it reflects a national weakness.

A good example for this is the political uproar in the Philippines in 1995 connected with the Flor Contemplacion case, in which a Filipina maid was hanged in Singapore, after being found guilty of the murder of her employer. The case strained relations between the two countries and led to a heated debate in the Philippines about the situation of the estimated 700,000 Filipinos who go to work overseas each year. In the wake of the affair, the Philippine government banned migration of domestic workers to Singapore (a ban which was largely circumvented). It also announced a range of measures to warn migrants not to go to areas considered risky, to provide them with better advice services, and to supply legal aid in the event of accusations against them. In June 1995, the Philippines passed the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act to improve monitoring of the conditions of overseas contract workers (OCWs).

Yet countries like the Philippines are heavily dependent on labour emigration. The market power lies with the recruiting countries, and with the agents who organise migration. Measures of protection are not very effective.

In a country where emigration is becoming the norm, and a 'culture of migration' is emerging, ideas on transnational belonging and consciousness gain importance. Such developments present a major challenge to the nation-state model, with its inherent claim of undivided loyalties, as the recent book *Nations Unbound* by Basch, Glick-Schiller and Blanc (1994) has pointed out. This has become a major theme in the Philippines, especially with regard to settlement in the USA. Permanent emigrants may be seen as a diaspora, which retains links with the homeland (even after becoming US citizens), but also as people who betray the nation, by taking their energy and skills away from national development.

The emergence of international communicative networks, linking emigrants to their countries of origin through a variety of familial, economic and emotional ties, is not just a theoretical issue in the Philippines. It is also a lived experience, and has given rise to special institutions and policies.

Foremost among these is the concept of *Balikbayan*, literally people coming back to the Philippine nation. *Balikbayans* may be overseas contract workers, US

permanent residents or even US citizens of Filipino origin. Special programs have been set up facilitate their return, including travel documentation, tax privileges and import concessions. The aim of the *Balibayan* concept seems to be to retain the feeling of national belonging for Filipino emigrants, for both economic and political reasons. However, this leads to a deterritorialisation of the nation, in the sense that people who live abroad and even have overseas citizenship are treated as part of the national community, at least in some respects.

Underlying discussions in the Philippines is often the notion that if only the country could follow the now normal Asian trajectory to tigerhood, then the national shame of emigration could be eliminated. Yet this goal remains elusive, and diasporic consciousness continues to evolve.

6. A 'Monocultural' Immigration Country: Japan

For immigration countries, admitting to the potential for permanent settlement means addressing major political issues connected with citizenship and national identity. Japanese leaders have rejected a foreign labour policy mainly because of fears of settlement, which might jeopardise the ideal of an ethnically homogeneous population.

Immigrant numbers in Japan are still fairly small: an estimated 1.7 million in 1997 (including undocumented workers). This makes up 1.4 per cent of the total population - far lower than in other developed countries. However, the quite rapid increase in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, during the 'Bubble Economy' period, made immigration a major political issue.

Many members of the Korean-origin minority, a result of colonial labour recruitment, are in the third or fourth generations of settlement. They still find it hard to obtain Japanese citizenship. Total numbers are over 700,000 - two-fifths of all immigrants in Japan. They remain highly segregated and form a discriminated minority

In the late 1980s employers wanted to recruit unskilled foreign workers to alleviate severe labour shortages. The government refused. Immigration law was tightened up in 1990, closing the 'front door' to foreign workers, but opening a number of legal 'side doors':

- Free admission for descendants of Japanese emigrants to Latin America, the Nikkei (mainly from Brazil and Peru): about 250,000 currently. They usually do not speak Japanese and are not allowed to become citizens, but they are allowed to do any jobs.
- Trainees, allowed to work in factories on the basis of 'on the job training' - usually a veiled form of unskilled labour.
- Language students enrolled at Japanese language schools, who are allowed to work for a certain number of hours - usually also a covert form of labour recruitment.
- Entertainers - women recruited mainly from the Philippines and Thailand as dancers, hostesses etc. This was the earliest form of labour inflow from the mid-1980s, and was often really prostitution, controlled by traffickers and the Yakuza.

However, all these 'side doors' do not provide enough labour, and many workers come in through the 'back door' - entry on tourist visas and illegal employment. Large numbers from China, Bangladesh, Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Iran.

No doubt such entries have declined during the current crisis, but there are many signs of the beginning of long-term stay and community formation:

- nearly 50 per cent of *illegal* workers stayed over 3 years (legal migrants usually stay much longer);
- increasing numbers of international marriages;
- residential concentrations (e.g. Muslims in Isezaki City, various Asian groups in Shinjuku, Chinese in Ikebukoro, Latin Americans in Tokai area near Nagoya), associated with the emergence of ethnic business, ethnic media; and places of worship.

In short, all the signs of emerging ethnic groups - just what the Japanese government wanted to avoid.

Japan is the East Asian country which comes closest to western ideas of democracy and *Rechtstaat*, the rule of law. European countries could not in the end keep immigrants outside the system of civil, political and social rights. Will the same apply in Japan? In fact Japanese laws make it extremely hard to become a citizen. But social rights are often a local matter, and legal immigrants are in many cases gaining a high degree of inclusion.

With regard to political rights there have been legal challenges in Japan to laws which exclude long-term foreign residents from the right to vote. In the 'Kimu Local Suffrage Case' concerning rights of the Korean minority, the Japanese Supreme Court decided in 1995 that the Constitution does not give the right local suffrage to foreign residents, but also that the Constitution does not preclude this, so that local voting rights could be granted through a legislative act. This decision is considerably more liberal than a parallel one by the German Federal Constitutional Court in 1990.

In the long run, globalisation and immigration seem likely to erode the Japanese myth of homogeneity and monoculturalism. Migration is only one factor. Others are the global cultural industry, increasing travel of Japanese abroad, and the experience of Japanese businessmen and managers who are posted overseas.

7. A 'Multicultural' Immigration Country: Malaysia

Japan is a monocultural country of immigration, and in contrast Malaysia can be defined as a multicultural country of immigration. There was considerable circulation in pre-colonial times, followed by labour recruitment. It has had massive labour immigration in recent years as a result of rapid industrialisation. This is despite the still relatively low wage-levels, and the fact that many Malaysians also emigrate (especially those of Chinese ethnicity).

The Malaysian Government is concerned about the effects of immigration on the country's complex ethnic balance. In 1988 the population was 22 million, of which 61 per cent were Malay, 28 per cent Chinese, 8 per cent Indian and 3 per cent other. Malaysian officials seem much more willing to accept illegal Indonesians or Muslim-Filipinos immigrants, compared with Filipinos or Burmese, because of their cultural and religious similarity to the Malay majority.

There is both legal labour recruitment and spontaneous undocumented entry from neighbouring countries (Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand) and other Asian countries

(Burma, Bangladesh, Nepal, India). In addition, there is some recent white immigration e.g. Russian sex-workers and domestic servants. In 1998 there were 70,000 expatriate highly-skilled workers, 1.2 million legal foreign workers, about 1 million illegals. Together they form up to 15 per cent of the labour force, in domestic service, plantations, manufacturing and construction. Thus, the Malaysian economy exhibits structural dependence on migrant workers.

Government policy has been to prevent settlement and reduce numbers. In 1996, Malaysia started building a 500 kilometre long wall along its northern border with Thailand, to stop illegal entries. The wall did not get very far, and was more a symbolic act. In early 1997, the government announced plans for mass deportations of illegals, claimed to be as numerous as 2 million (although relatively few were actually expelled). They were blamed for crime, disease and immorality. Scapegoating of migrant workers for social evils is a new trend throughout Asia.

Such trends have grown in the current economic crisis. There was an announcement of a policy of mass expulsions in early 1998. However, this was soon toned down, partly because of fears of destabilisation in Indonesia. The government announced that it would not renew permits of workers laid off in construction, manufacturing and the services: some would be re-deployed to plantations. However, there is little evidence of large-scale return migration, mainly for reasons mentioned in section 3 above. Some Indonesians were rounded up, held in bad conditions and deported despite fear of persecution in Indonesia - e.g. Achinese. The UNHCR intervened in this process.

Despite government policy, there are trends towards family reunion and community formation, especially in Sabah. Azizah Kassim found Indonesian neighbourhoods developing as squatter camps (but often with good self-made housing) around Kuala Lumpur. Increasing numbers of children are being born to immigrants, but with unclear nationality, in Malaysia.

Overall in Malaysia there is a failure of the policy of temporary migration. Policy is characterised by constant change, ambivalence and the failure to implement measures. Whereas the government announced that it was going to deport a million migrants, probably only about 10,000 were actually sent home. Control breaks down because it is often easier and more beneficial for people to migrate illegally. Nonetheless, official control systems prevent job-changing and keep wages down. This official loss of control, together with denial of trends towards settlement is likely to lead to future conflict. Current economic trends could mean polarisation of the labour market and ethnicisation of poverty, carrying with them the danger of a split society.

8. Conclusion

It is hard to generalise on East and Southeast Asia. It is a large region marked by enormous diversity within and between countries. One obvious distinction lies between the more culturally diverse regions of SE Asia and the more homogenous countries of NE Asia.

Trends towards globalisation and increasing population mobility are bringing rapid change for the region. Yet many of these countries are in the middle of post-colonial nation-building processes, or dealing with the consequences of the end of

the Cold War and major geopolitical shifts. The phases of nation-building and post-nationalism, which took up centuries in Europe, are being telescoped into a few decades.

The construction of democratic and inclusive forms of citizenship under such conditions is an unprecedented undertaking. The size and the rapidity of the changes presents great challenges. Like Europeans a generation ago, Asian leaders are hesitant in recognising the realities of porous boundaries, new minorities and growing diversity. Yet in the long run, there is no other way forward if cohesive, prosperous and just societies are to be achieved.

Sources

For sections 1-4 of the paper, more detailed material and references are to be found in:

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